

# Helms Accuses State Dept. Aide of Smear Tactics

By BOB SECTER  
and DOYLE McMANUS  
Times Staff Writers

WASHINGTON—Sen. Jesse Helms on Monday bitterly accused a State Department official of orchestrating a smear campaign as the FBI began checking charges that sensitive intelligence data was leaked to Chile's right-wing military government through Helms' office.

His comments filled with sarcasm and indignation, Helms asserted that Assistant Secretary of State Elliott Abrams triggered the investigation by concocting the Chilean story to discredit the senator secretly passing it to leaders of the Senate Select Intelligence Committee, who then relayed it to federal agents.

"Elliott crept up here in the dark of the night and makes all these false charges . . . and then slips back in his hole in the State Department," charged Helms, a North Carolina Republican and staunch defender of Gen. Augusto Pinochet, the Chilean dictator.

" . . . It's poppycock. They're (State Department officials) trying to silence me. They don't like the fact I'm opposed to their little agenda down there (in Chile), which is to sell out the U.S."

And Helms suggested that Secretary of State George P. Shultz was aware of what Abrams allegedly was up to. "Of course he knows it," Helms snapped when asked about Shultz.

At the State Department, spokesman Charles Redman denied that the agency had requested the investigation. But, asked specifically whether the Senate Select Intelligence Committee's request for the FBI probe followed an appearance by Abrams before the panel, Redman merely smiled enigmatically. A spokeswoman for Abrams said he would have no further comment.

The committee, which monitors American intelligence agencies, generally meets behind closed doors and rarely discloses details of its deliberations. But Helms claimed that "two or three" committee members he had contacted

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mentioned Abrams as the source of the allegations, while other panel members said they knew nothing at all about the charges.

Administration officials said the investigation is focused on aides to Helms, although they did not rule out involvement by the senator as well. Although officials have refused to disclose details of the supposedly compromised intelligence operation, it apparently involved the gathering of secrets about the Pinochet regime.

The Chilean government was believed to have learned of the operation last month, at the same time that Helms and his aides made a controversial trip to Chile. During the trip, Helms strongly defended Pinochet against charges of repression and suggested that U.S. Ambassador Harry G. Barnes Jr. should be recalled.

The conservative Helms has waged a longstanding war with the State Department, which he considers to be riddled with liberal career employees who frequently sabotage President Reagan's foreign policy goals. On several occasions, Helms, who sits on the Foreign Relations Committee, has infuriated State and White House officials by delaying or blocking Senate confirmation of top-level diplomats.

Although Helms is not a member of the intelligence panel, he can get access to its information on Chile through his chairmanship of the Western Hemisphere subcommittee of the Foreign Relations Committee.

In this latest tussle, Helms suggested that Abrams and other State Department officials were trying to retaliate against him for holding up past nominees and he indicated that such a move might prompt him to delay even more confirmations.

Referral of the case to the Justice Department opens the possibility of criminal charges being filed, should the allegations be substantiated. However, it was unclear what law may have been violated or whether the alleged acts would be shielded by congressional immunity.

The case also could be referred to the Senate Ethics Committee for action. There, too, however, lawmakers are unsure about what action could be taken or what punishment meted out.

Mark Helmke, a spokesman for Senate Foreign Relations Chairman Richard G. Lugar (R-Ind.), said that Senate aides must sign

secrecy agreements when they get security clearances. He also said that he did not believe aides are covered by any form of congressional immunity from prosecution.

Christopher Manion, Helms' aide on the Foreign Relations Committee, said he did not know whether he was the target of an investigation but flatly denied passing any secrets to the Chileans. Manion is the brother of Daniel A. Manion, the recently confirmed federal judge whose nomination had become the center of a major battle between Reagan and the Senate.

Clifford Kiracofe Jr., an aide who accompanied Helms on the trip, said that no one on the senator's staff discussed intelligence matters with Chilean officials during the visit.

"We can only conclude that this is a fabrication by the ambassador in Chile. Barnes, who cabled the fabrication to Abrams in Washington, who took the fabrication at face value and reported it to the intelligence committee," Kiracofe said.

A Helms aide who asked not to be identified went further.

"It's a fact that U.S. foreign policy is not controlled from Washington; instead, the State Department and the CIA are controlled by the New York banking interests," he said. "And it's a fact that the New York banks are running scared, owing to their exposure in Latin America. . . . Sen. Helms is the archenemy of the New York bankers. This is the fundamental reason for the State Department and CIA attacks."